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## **SERBIA DISCOVERS 80 MIGRANTS HEADING TO EU**

- 27.12.2016

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DW (26 December 2016)

Serbian authorities have arrested four suspected people smugglers after discovering three groups of migrants in a van, a truck and a shipping container. One of the suspects is an Afghan national, officials said.

Security forces pulled over a truck with German license plates in central Serbia and found 41 migrants in its trailer, the country's defense ministry said on Monday. The truck's driver, a Serbian citizen, was arrested.

Also on Monday, a combined taskforce of police and soldiers arrested two Serbian nationals and an Afghani in the same region, after discovering 36 migrants in the cargo area of their van.

Three migrants were also rescued from a shipping container at a border crossing between Serbia and Croatia, officials said. A police officer patrolling the area heard cries for help coming from the inside of the metal box. On opening the container, the customs officers found two young men from Algeria and one migrant from Syria.

According to preliminary information, an unknown suspect helped the three migrants to cut the customs seal and get inside. He then closed the door and attempted to repair the seal, apparently without knowing that the container might remain where it was for several days. The people were left inside without food, water or heating. The container was transporting house paint and painting equipment.

The migrants were heading along the so-called Balkan route that leads from the Greek islands to EU member states such as Austria, Germany, and Sweden. Serbia and its EU neighbors, Croatia and Hungary, effectively closed their borders in March but Serbian authorities estimate that an additional 110,000 migrants have since managed to slip across the border.

Several days ago, Croatian authorities discovered a van with 62 migrants, several of whom had passed out due to carbon monoxide poisoning.

dj/jm (Reuters, Beta)

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